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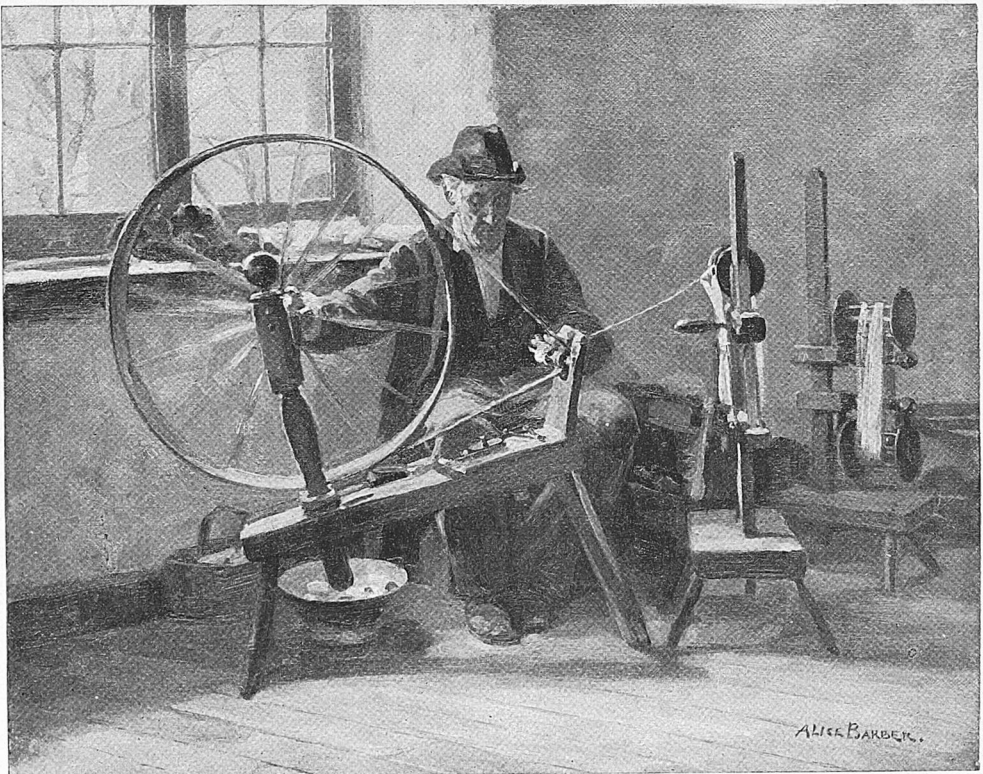
A CLEVER WOMAN ILLUSTRATOR.

BY FREDERICK W. WEBBER.

(With original illustrations by Alice Barber Stephens.)



O be ordinary is as possible for the illustrator as it is for the chronicler. The clever writer's story is piquant ; the clever artist's picture is unique. Novelty is not an absolutely necessary element in the subject, but the treatment derives value from the originality displayed therein. Everyday occurrences acquire interest when described by one whose feelings or imagination can imbue the statement of fact with realistic movement and warmth ; and every-day scenes cease to be commonplace when depicted by an artist to whom expression, grouping and color suggest a thought to be embodied in the picture. There are so-called pictures that are lifeless because of their lack of motive ; as barren of idea as the village photographer's portrait of the country bumpkin in his Sunday suit and " now-look-pleasant " smile. There are many limners who can draw a face or a figure, but it is only the artist who can make the face betray character and the pose become narrative.



"SPOOLING THE YARN."

Alice Barber Stephens is particularly fortunate in this respect. She has achieved pronounced success as an illustrator, and is aided in her art by practical knowledge of the mechanical processes incidental thereto. Her first training in her chosen calling was a thorough course of study in wood engraving, which she pursued at the Philadelphia Academy of Design for women. The fact that for two and a half years she was constantly engaged on Scribner's—now The Century Magazine—attests the artistic as well as the mechanical excellence of her work as an engraver. She was not satisfied to remain a mere reproducer, however, but essayed the rôle of an illustrator, for which she prepared herself by the study of drawing at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts.



"IN THE STUDIO."

It is only within a few years that women have been permitted to attain prominence in the ranks of artists and illustrators, although there have been individual women who have compelled recognition by the strong merit of their productions. But those who won place were

for a long time exceptional instances of whom it is necessary to mention only Rosa Bonheur as a type. But in this as in many other things, the close of the century has witnessed a change, and the field of art is as widely open to woman as it is to man. There is no reason why this should not be so; on the contrary, there are many reasons why it is really an advance, for woman with her more delicate



"ALMSHOUSE SHOEMAKERS."



"LADY ELEANOR'S MANTLE."

sensibilities and her natural love of the beautiful is apt to have a closer sympathy with nature and life, and a quicker perception of the poetic element which is so strong an inspiration for artistic effort.

Mrs. Stephens has experienced the advantages of changed conditions in the success that has attended her in her new field. Her services were almost monopolized for several years by Harper & Brothers, whose high standard of



"A SPRING MORNING."



"SEWING CARPET BALLS."

requirement is universally known. During the past two years she has furnished illustrations for other publishing firms, and her work appears in *The Century*, *The Cosmopolitan*, *Frank Leslie's*, *The Ladies' Home Journal* of Philadelphia, and various Boston publications. She has been a student as well as a worker, and her studies in American schools of art have been supplemented by instruction obtained in the schools of



"AN INTERESTING BOOK."

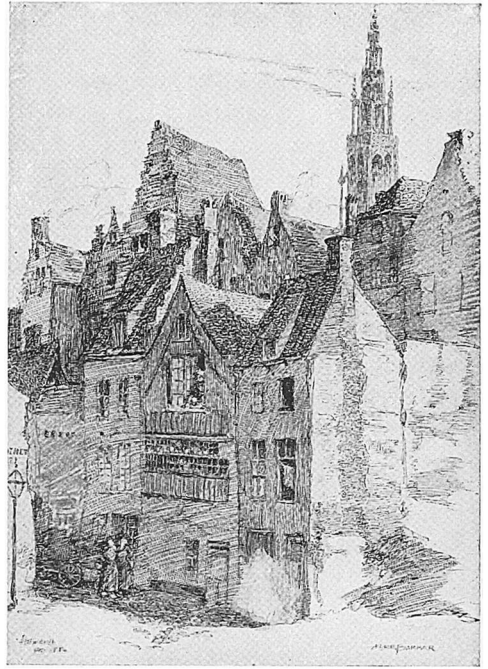
Julian and Carlo Rossi in Paris, and by careful inspection of galleries in the French capital and the leading art centres of England, Holland, Belgium and Italy. Her work in black and white is strengthened by her study of color, and she has achieved distinction as an artist in both oil and water colors. She is a regular contributor to the annual exhibitions in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, and her "Portrait of

a Boy," exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, won the Mary Smith prize—not so small an honor as the name may suggest.

In her drawing, Mrs. Stephens adheres most closely to nature, and she is always accurate in her delineation of detail. Her faces are expressive, her figures animated, and the surroundings assist materially in the presentation of the subject. So careful is she in every part of her work, that almost invariably her figure pieces are enriched by interesting studies of still-life, and the inanimate combines with the animate to tell the story. She has a delicate mastery of light and shade which enables her to reveal complexion in a countenance, texture in fabrics, and material in surroundings. The finish of her pictures is so elaborate that nothing is left to the imagination except the motive of the work, and that is so artistically suggested that the picture cannot fail to convey the idea embodied in it. She is always sincere. Her work may be conventional now and again, in some respects, but it is honest in its

dealing with the governing motive, and pleasing in the fidelity with which every feature is made to contribute to the naturalness of the general effect.

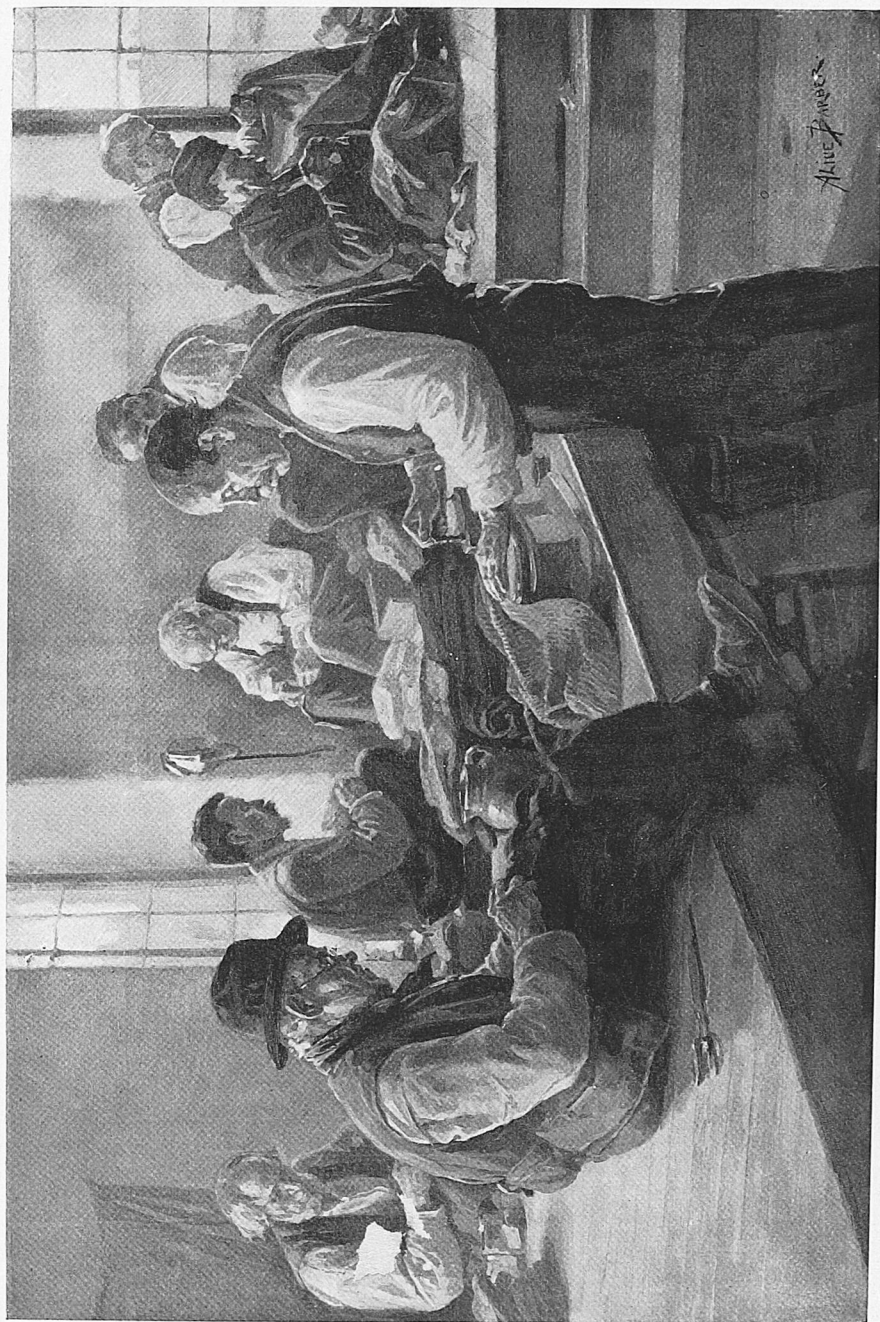
One cannot forbear the wish, at times, that the artist would be less scrupulous in her care for general minutiae, but in the light of her thorough knowledge of the subject in hand, and her certainty of touch, her close attention to the small things of nature gives pardon to what often approaches a technical failing. Within the past few years there has appeared a decided strength in the execution, whether of brush or pen-point, of the greater mass of Mrs. Stephens' work, and that she has advanced in skill with the flight of time no one can honestly gainsay. She has acquired a facility in the management of her artist's tools that is but seldom displayed among the more serious picture-makers of her sex, and at the present time she stands with the foremost women painters and illustrators



"A BIT OF ANTWERP."



"SHOE BINDING."



"A GROUP OF TAILORS."



"A PORTRAIT STUDY."

The example she has set by her constant industry and her fortitude in the face of discouragement rest of the world, of life's unpleasant-which any ambitious woman look but a difficult and the learning of greater part of one's g ing application. her obscurity to the Mrs. Stephens has that was certain to now that she has

throughout the land and has acquired a rare skill with brush and pencil she is a worker and enthusiast just the same. Her life amid all her work is a happy one, for she loves her occupation, and the pleasure she finds in making a picture is almost of itself a sufficient compensation for the labor involved. Of such temperament the real artist is born, and Alice Barber Stephens is certainly a genuine artist. She has the fine feeling for color which denotes the real painter. In portraiture Mrs. Stephens has also achieved no small success. She has the unusual faculty of fixing the character as well as the contour of her model's features, and has a way of infusing life and artistic attractiveness into her portrait paintings that make them desirable possessions, even though the person whose face is limned is unknown to one. In short, Mrs. Stephens has the abilities of an experienced portrayer of real things and live people.

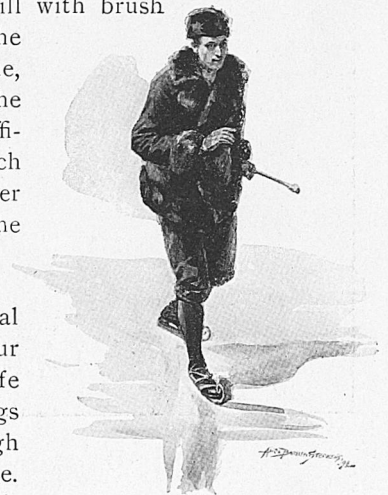
of the country. Homely subjects attract Mrs. Stephens most, and her pictures of the old men and women of the Philadelphia almshouse, and the simple-minded people of other localities, are among the best works she has executed. She has a liking, too, for subtle effects of sunlight, and her studies of interiors are as accurate in detail as the catalogue of a furniture dealer, and as pleasing artistically as a portrait by Rembrandt. To this combination of painstaking execution and a keen sense of artistic freedom, Mrs. Stephens may safely assign her present prominence. She has individuality and industry, and with such gifts treasure-laden kingdoms have many times been conquered.

A cheery future for artists of the gentler sex is foretold in the successes attained by Alice Barber Stephens.



"A COLONIAL DINING-ROOM."

(for she, with the has had her share ries) are qualities tious woman artist emulate. Art is not ment—and too upon it as such—arduous profession, which requires the life and an unflag-From the days of present moment toiled with a zeal bring success, and become known



"A LONG SPIN."